

RollPlay



GM NOTEBOOK
ISSUE TWENTYONE

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Welcome, Patrons!

This month we have a bunch of new stuff because we have a brand new show! Welcome RollPlay: Far Verona to the schedule. You might already have visited the fan discord and joined in the faction fun, but if you haven't, make your way to youtu.be/twvZFOVadnY and have a watch, it'll let you know what you need to do to join a Faction and get in on the fun. We've got a cast, we've got characters and I'm going to share my thoughts on both in this issue, as well as outline all the major faction and setting stuff we've devised so far. April was busy but May will be even busier and I couldn't be more pleased that things are blowing up the way they have and to have all of you along for the ride.

Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 21 of the GM's Notebook.

Adam Koebel
RollPlay GM



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3.

FAR VERONA: CAST & CHARACTERS



After what seemed like a thousand years, we were able to finally comb through all the options, negotiate and discuss, cajole and convince our way to having a cast of players for RollPlay: Far Verona. Now that we have our cast together, let's get to know them a little better, shall we?

(Since this info was all collected prior to the airing of Episode 1 of Far Verona, there might be some changes, adjustments, etc. This is how it looked at the end of April!)

Player**Max "GassyMexican" Gonzalez**

Max was a clear and obvious choice once he was an option - originally our concern was that he would be too busy to be interested in an invitation but when we asked Max to be a part of Far Verona, he agreed enthusiastically. I've had a wonderful time playing RPGs with Max since we started Court of Swords and I'm so glad he's going to get a chance to join this crew. Max brings a ton of sci-fi knowledge to the table: he's a huge Mass Effect and Star Trek fan and I can't wait to see what kinds of cool stuff he has planned for his character. Max is an inspiration when it comes to characterisation.

Name**Booker Greaves**

(house tbd, likely Crux)

A cop turned hunter of illegal synthetics

Partial Warrior / Partial Expert

Stats

Strength	8
Dexterity	13
Constitution	10
Intelligence	14
Wisdom	9
Charisma	14

Skills

Notice	1
Shoot	0
Sneak	0
Survive	0

Foci

Alert	1
Diehard	1
Authority	1

Player**ThatBronzeGirl**

Bronze and I met at TwitchCon, albeit very briefly, and when she mentioned she'd done some RPG content on Twitch, I went out of my way to check out her stuff. She's worked on HyperRPG as GM before, and is an avid comic book fan. I was blown away during our initial talks by her deep sci-fi knowledge, especially of classic sci-fi novels. She's going to be playing the only non-noble member of the crew, someone with a painful past and a grim looking future.

Name**TBD**

An indentured engineer
Expert

Stats

Strength	5
Dexterity	10
Constitution	12
Intelligence	13
Wisdom	14
Charisma	9

Skills

Administer	1
Fix	0
Lead	0
Program	1

Foci

Ironhide	1
Tinker	1
Hacker	1

Player**Mark Hulmes**

Mark and I met a year or so back at the Alpha Roundtable event where we shared the spotlight with Matt Mercer and had a conversation about what GMing means and how it's affected our lives. Mark is an earnest dude with a ton of D&D experience running his own game for High Rollers and you know I love playing with other GMs. He's coming to the table fired up with ideas from Macross, a big inspiration for his character.

Name**Princeps Fornax Argus Jaycen**

Expert

Stats

Strength	18
Dexterity	15
Constitution	8
Intelligence	12
Wisdom	13
Charisma	11

Skills

Exert	0
Notice	1
Pilot	2

Foci

Alert	1
Specialist (Pilot)	1

Player**AnneMunition**

I am thrilled beyond imagining to be able to play a game with Anne again. The last time we played together, Anne took a dark hand her character was dealt and played that hand to the grave. I was so impressed, and it's been a great thing (I think you'll agree) watching Anne grow as a roleplayer from her time on the West Marches, through Balance of Power and Blades. Now we get to see Anne play a psychic diplomat, who I suspect we'll see talk the party out of trouble more than once.

Name**Seeress Nomi Qa'a**

Psychic

Stats

Strength	8
Dexterity	11
Constitution	5
Intelligence	12
Wisdom	11
Charisma	18

Skills

Lead	1
Notice	0
Talk	0
Precognition	0
Telepathy	0

Foci

Diplomat	1
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4.

FAR VERONA: FACTIONS OF THE SECTOR

■ The Houses Major

▼ House Crux (*The Cross*)

Motto: Ours to Bear

Responsibility: Lawkeeping

- × Forerunners for the throne
- × Ancient and powerful, always have been
- × Ties to the church are strong
- × Responsible for saving humanity from the terrible mistakes of House Cygnus
- × Vehemently anti-synthetic
- × Keeper of the law and strictures of the Empire
- × Adjutants, adjudicators, solicitors and executioners of the legal aspects of Empire
- × Arbitrators yes, Inquisitors also

▼ House Fornax (*The Furnace*)

Motto: Forged in Fire

Responsibility: Starship Construction

- × Inventors and designers of the current iteration of the spike drive
- × Builders of fleets and ships
- × Industrious and relatively apolitical
- × There's never been a Fornax emperor
- × Ancient house, with a great deal of clout and power

▼ House Vela (*The Sails*)

Motto: On Sails of Light

Responsibility: Star Charts & Navigation

- × Control the great Library of star charts and sector maps
- × Protectors of knowledge and history
- × Formerly explorers now earthbound guardians of information
- × Information brokers and secret keepers
- × Navigators on **every ship** - they're the only ones who can teach astral navigation

■ The Houses Minor

▼ House Aquila (*The Eagle*)

Motto: Fiercely and Faithfully

Responsibility: The Imperial Legions

- × Warriors and generals
- × Infantry especially, but also GIANT ROBOTS
- × Serve the Throne not the Emperor
- × Deal not in guns and bombs or equipment but in human troops
- × Weakened by the loss of their synthetic legions
- × Currently pretty sure House Triangulum is doing bad things

▼ House Eridanus (*The River*)

Motto: In the Black

Responsibility: Imperial Economy & Treasury

- × Deals with the Corporate Powers
- × Has a hand in trade
- × Controls and manages the Imperial accounts
- × Responsible for the taxation of the other houses
- × Sort of universally disliked but they get the job done
- × If you need a loan between nobles, you ask them
- × If they hate you, guess who has to pay way higher taxes (it's you)

▼ House Lyra (*The Lyre*)

Motto: Between the Stars

Responsibility: Art and Philosophy

- × Secret techniques of psychic manipulation (more telepaths than any other house - strict breeding)
- × The house responsible for funeral practice in the empire
- × A little bit Bene Gesserit
- × A little bit psychic death cult
- × Manipulators and string pullers
- × Propagandists of the empire

▼ House Pyxis (*The Compass*)

Motto: Ever Searching

Responsibility: ???

- × Formerly part of House Vela, splintered off when the Library was built
- × Explorers, no fixed home
- × A loose network of nobles
- × Space rangers and travellers
- × Once a year, they connect at a secret meeting and share exploration and illicit maps
- × The most alien friendly
- × Cosmopolitan and open to new ideas
- × A bit weird, a bit flakey
- × Voted most likely to forget that they're human at all

▼ House Reticulum (*The Reticle*)

Motto: Our Sights Are True

- × Makes guns, bombs, flak cannons
- × Makes knives, swords, nukes
- × On the bleeding edge (lol) of weapon manufacturing
- × Near religious obsession with weapons and personal conflict
- × Invented and, with House Crux, are responsible for the Formal System of Noble Grievance Resolution
- × Duellists, seconds, gun and sword aficionados
- × The literal blade of the Empire
- × Employ and utilize the Bravos, a cadre of elite duellists who will fight EACH OTHER in your name
- × House is split between those who make and those who wield
- × Ruled by the top two in each branch (they traditionally hate each other but like, also might end up lovers too it's complicated)

▼ House Serpens (*The Serpent*)

Motto: Pierce the Veil

Responsibility: The Psychic Academy

- × House Serpens publicly known to have assassinated the previous Emperor Cygnus, an unforgivable crime even if it was done for good reason
- × No murder of an Emperor goes unpunished but the Houses have agreed to temporarily stay judgement due to circumstances
- × They see the future and know the ways forward
- × Have access to deep and powerful visions and psychic stuff
- × Yes, they do employ psychic assassins but also like, they run most of the big hospitals and biopsychic surgeries
- × If it weren't for Serpens, MES would just kill people

▼ House Triangulum (*The Triangle*)

Motto: Working the Angles

Responsibility: Science

- × Researchers and scientists
- × Terraformers and world builders
- × Dreaming of dyson spheres and megastructures
- × Vary from obsessive mad scientists to social scientists engineering a better life for humanity
- × Helped house Cygnus create the synthetics, for which they are currently being distrusted and are paying their debt to the other houses
- × Heavily monitored, heavily sanctioned and watched over carefully by Crux, Vela and Fornax
- × Many top scientists in the field of AI / VI and other related fields killed during the [WHATEVER WE CALL THE WAR AGAINST THE SYNTHETICS]
- × Especially distrusted by Aquila
- × Angling for an invitation to the Guild

■ The Dead House

▼ House Cygnus (*The Swan*)

Motto: By Our Hand

Responsibility: Synthetic Life

- × They are very dead, hunted to a man (or so Crux would have us believe) for their crimes against all humanity
- × They created the Synthetic who served us for generations but who would turn on us for their Cygnus masters
- × Betrayers all and apostates and villains
- × Also though, they basically invented modern AI / VI tech
- × Formerly the Imperial House
- × Now no living Cygnus would admit it
- × Without their work, the sector wouldn't be a human one
- × With them, we might all be robots
- × It's said they had secret links to the Guild
- × Crux had to get rid of them, and everyone else just followed along

■ The Corporates

▼ ACRE

- × Nobody actually remembers what it stands for, you ask anyone and you get a different reply
- × The board of directors is made up of temporarily de-nobled nobles
- × A Directorate is a way for a noble to gain power if their regular path is blocked
- × They handle all the grunt work of industry and agriculture
- × Keep the planets fed
- × They probably buy up serfdoms and run them for nobles at a percentage
- × Have excellent relationship with House Eridanus most of the time
- × Currently in the middle of a MASSIVE LABOUR CRISIS
- × Because like, farm and mining and labour intensive jobs used to be done by ROBOTS which Crux killed all of
- × But it's cool because they're rich as fuck
- × For now

▼ The Trilliant Ring

"Have The Time of Your Life"

- × Makers of luxury goods - space yachts, designer pharmaceuticals, cybernetic implants, much lux goods
- × If it's fancy and expensive and cool, it's probably a Trilli
- × Supposedly they made a series of skins for the Guild, once
- × Designed the bodies and programming of the Cygnus Pleasure Synth model
- × Which they're trying to not let you remember
- × Nobles love them because they're ferrari, moet & chandon and like, everyone's favourite drug dealer all in one thing

▼ The Deathless

- × Affect a very scary demeanor
- × Excellent business division
- × Generally friendly towards the Nobility, because that's who usually hires them
- × Guns for hire
- × Very much a space PMC
- × They were formed from surviving generals and warriors from the First Conflict, the war with the aliens, who didn't want to join House Aquila when it was formed
- × Declined to participate, turned down a contract to hunt Synthetics and kill Cygnus
- × Obviously, Crux holds a grudge

▼ The Prism Network

"The Full Spectrum"

- × Both all the news, entertainment and general media in the sector
- × Also, monitoring, spying, panopticon 1984 shit
- × The watch, and are watched by just about everyone in the sector
- × Control over public opinion, deep intelligence assets

■ The Spiritualists

▼ The High Church of Messiah-as-Emperor

- × Messianic religion that believes that the Emperor is a recurring reincarnation or eternal visitation of heaven's will in reality
- × Highly tied to the nobility, obviously
- × Embedded deeply as state religion
- × Controls, manages and facilitates every aspect of Imperial spiritual life
- × If an Emperor is not chosen, the High Exarch becomes Steward and Regent of the Empire
- × The actual doctrine is a mashup of various earth beliefs
- × Conservative religion, anti-alien, anti-synthetic (though only vocally really recently)
- × Pro human, pro nobility, hierarchy, structure, control

▼ The Church of Humanity, Repentant

- × Progressive religion, formed post-alien sector genocide war
- × Apologists and reunifiers
- × Repentant, varying from barely-religious sociologists and xenologist liberal academicians, etc to martyr cults and alien fetishists
- × Make good on all the awful shit we did to the aliens and each other and now synths
- × Believe that consciousness and the soul are one
- × Cartesian Heretics, technically
- × Not a splinter cult, they have a big following
- × Preach acceptance and love
- × Probably either are friends with or are courted by the UPC

■ Ex Miscellanea

▼ House Vagrant

Fake-Ass Motto: By Our Hand
"What's Yours Is Mine"

- × A collection of individual ships and small fleets that come from shitty worlds and banded together to raid and pillage
- × Housed in an asteroid field
- × Strike quickly and withdraw
- × Apolitical, save that they hate people who have money that they don't
- × Deal in kidnapping, piracy, smuggling, illegal transport
- × Currently have a good number of kidnapped nobles waiting for ransom
- × Slavery business is picking up...
- × Some of House Cygnus is definitely hiding out here with them

▼ 14 Red Dogs Triad

- × Deal in maltech
- × Assassination
- × Drugs (the bad kind)
- × Slavery, vice, gambling, etc
- × Racketeering, extortion
- × Illegal synth sales, stolen property from the Guild

▼ The Unified People's Collective

- × A loose collection of semi-related movements varying wildly in politics except:
- × Anti-nobility
- × Anti-imperial
- × Pro-letariat
- × Small government, planetary scale, etc.
- × Some of them are like communists others like libertarians

The Guild

NOT FOR PCs

- × Post humans, TL 6
- × Above and beyond the politics of the sector
- × Don't really consider themselves part of the human race
- × Pro-alien
- × Pro-synthetic
- × INCREDIBLY POWERFUL
- × Science magic; multiple bodies, nanotech, psitech, etc.
- × Experienced the singularity of technology and humanity already
- × Live in a cool dyson sphere
- × Could solve any of humanity's problems but they basically won't
- × Had their origins in a hacker collective / gaming guild
- × Basically just do weird space drugs, turn themselves into cybernetic dragon faerie elves, have a lot of very weird sex and play games all the time
- × Some of their games result in human genocide but that's how it goes
- × Totally lost touch with humanity
- × Have names like xX_Sephithroth_HarshTokes_DeezNutz_Xx

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Court of Swords:

the Devil, the Tower, and the Star

Lately, in Court of Swords, we've seen a lot of the more aggressive workings of the Tower - murder and mayhem, burning temples and razing sections of the City of Brass to save them from being taken over by the strange creatures we've come to call the Farang. I've noticed a lot of fans discussing and debating the nature of the Tower and its responsibility in the Arcana, and I wanted to clear a little bit of that up and talk about where the Tower sits in the larger scale of things, cosmologically and philosophically.

The Tower sits between two other Arcana, the Devil and the Star. The Devil symbolizes, in Court of Swords, all things worldly. It may seem to outsiders that the Devil and the Mara are alike - they both seek rewards here-and-now, they want empowerment of the flesh, they want to "have it all" riches, decadent food, even more decadent experiences. The Devil celebrates that-which-is and is an important, if somewhat misunderstood aspect of the Journey of the Soul. When we look at the Devil, and those who serve that

arcana, we're seeing people shackled to their lives in a way the very religion they belong to eschews. This kind of contradictory element makes for great tension and storytelling because even though the Devil seems out of place, he's like his neighbor, the Tower, in that he serves a larger purpose. Before we can understand hope, we must understand loss, and before we understand loss, we must have something to lose. The Devil exists to build us up, to teach us that there are worldly pleasures to be had and that we need only exert our will, reach out and grasp them. The Devil, too, teaches us to understand the ways we're fettered to those earthly things - as we build our gambling houses, as we fill our vaults with gold, so too are we shackling

ourselves to the world of reality. We're becoming fatted and comfortable on our earthly rewards. Which places us square into the influence of the Tower.

Following the Devil, who gives us everything we could ever want in exchange for our enlightenment comes the Tower. The Tower is not a god of chaos and destruction the way a Loki, a Khorne or a Talos might be. The Tower is the uncaring result of building too high. The Tower is the myth of hubris cast down, the story of Babel and the sun that burnt away Icarus' wings. The Tower doesn't destroy because it seeks destruction, it destroys and unmakes because that is the nature of things. The reason, as an aside, that I



love that Ramus is a Light Domain Cleric but still follows the Tower is that the tower is an illuminator in that most terrible way - shining the light of truth on what false treasure the Devil has given us. "Apocalypse" comes from the ancient Greek *apokálypsis* which means "an uncovering". Which I think is a big part of service to the Tower - uncovering the false world of delights that the Devil provides. In this campaign, we've seen the Tower's destruction on a massive, fantasy scale - war and fire, siege and sacrifice but the Tower works subtly too, undermining the foundations as much as it strikes lightning at the summit. The purpose and reason for this isn't destruction for its own sake. Everything the Tower does is ultimately to make way for what comes next. The analogy I like best is the forest fire - without the conflagration, the forest becomes choked with old, dead growth and cannot live. Without the Tower to slap us in the face, we can never see the Star.

We've seen so little of its influence, but the Star is always there, waiting for the Tower's work to be done. It's a symbol of hope, but not in the way that the Sun might be. The

Sun will always be there, it rises at the end of night (the cycle after Devil / Tower / Star is Star / Moon / Sun after all) but before it we must see the first twinkling of hope in the darkness. The Star is hope at the bottom of Pandora's box - it's the first sign that, after our false accomplishments are made by the Devil and ruined by the Tower there is still some true future - enlightenment. The Star is not "hope that everything will be okay" but the concept of "hope for something better" and is an integral part of the Tower's work. Fundamentally, everything the Tower does, it does for the Star, whose procession is made possible through the rubble of the Tower's work.

There were some questions about the Tower, and how they operate, and I hope this has cleared them up. Someone asked "if the Tower wants destruction, why are they so afraid of it happening to them" and I think what's important to distinguish is that the Tower's destruction always serves a divine purpose, even if we're not able to see it. The Tower's own destruction only comes at the end of a great work. The final cleanup, as it were. Stick around for that...

6.

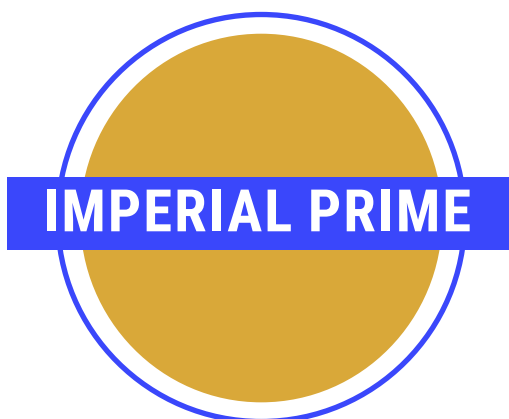
FAR VERONA:

ACHERON RHO HIGHLIGHTS

Using **sectorswithoutnumber.com** I recently assembled the various planets and systems that will make up Acheron Rho, our home sector for RollPlay: Far Verona. Herein you can find a handful of planets I'm particularly interested in. If you'd like to explore the system yourself, click here:

sectorswithoutnumber.com/sector/m11ZXB0t6xiJGo21EKio

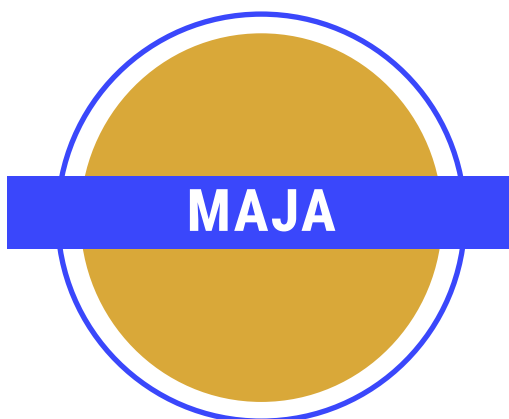




Sector Coordinates: 0505
Atmosphere: Breathable mix
Temperature: Temperate
Biosphere: Human-miscible
Population: Billions of inhabitants
Tech Level: TL 5
Traits:

- × **Rigid Culture**
- × **Urbanized Surface**

Crown jewel of the Empire, home to the empty throne and one of only a very few Tech Level 5 planets. This system is sacred and protected by the pacts of the Houses Noble against invasion or control by any particular power save the Emperor, but for how long? It is a high prize whether gained by force or legally through the assumption of Imperial power.



Sector Coordinates: 0505
Atmosphere: Thick atmosphere
Temperature: Burning
Biosphere: No native biosphere
Population: Several million inhabitants
Tech Level: TL 4+
Traits:

- × **Major Shipyard**
- × **Seismic instability**

Probably the most-orbited body in Acheron Rho, Maja is itself a volcanic mine and rich with mineral materials that fuel the mighty spaceyards of House Fornax. Maja is the furnace for their great endeavours, those brave and strong enough to harness her terrible flames. Many of Fornax' true habitations are on the moon, Via, or in orbital superstructures above the surface.



Sector Coordinates: 0606

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Temperature: Variable temperate-to-warm

Biosphere: Immiscible

Population: Hundreds of million inhabitants

Tech Level: TL 4

Traits:

- × Alien Ruins
- × Preceptor Archive
- × Great Work

The libraries of Vela are housed on Haqani, an inhospitable work marred by the ancient inhabitants and their struggles. This is where the Empire keeps its precious maps and where study of the stars and their pathways takes place. It's the birthplace of the wanderer-house Pyxis, as well, who split from their elders and ventured out into the stars.



Sector Coordinates: 0102

Atmosphere: Thick atmosphere

Temperature: Variable temperate-to-warm

Biosphere: No native biosphere

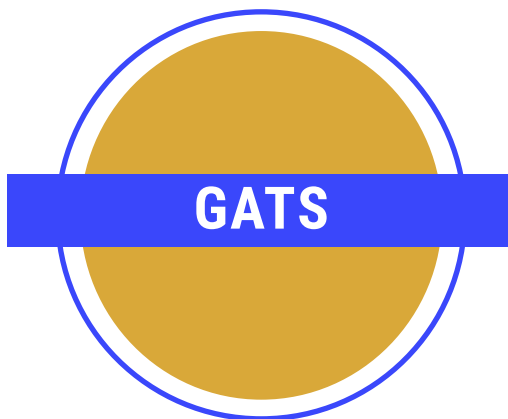
Population: Billions of inhabitants

Tech Level: TL 4

Traits:

- × Cheap Life
- × Secret Masters
- × Trade Hub

A former Cygnus holding, recently having rebelled and put down their leader during the crusade against the synthetics of that House. A system in turmoil but with a strong community leading it towards victory. Whether this new Red Dogs Society will be able to keep the Empire from returning and seizing control of Hong Lu remains to be seen. What are their true motivations and will it matter when House Crux comes calling?



Atmosphere: Corrosive and invasive atmosphere

Temperature: Frozen

Biosphere: No native biosphere

Population: Failed colony

Tech Level: TL 0

Traits:

- × **Cyborgs**
- × **Tomb World**

This was once the homeworld to House Cygnus, mighty and imperious. Now, thanks to Fornax ships, Crux commands and Reticulum planet-killers, it is a frozen, blasted wasteland, home only to the last remnants of its former civilization. You can kill a planet, but it takes longer to kill a people - there are yet those who live here, human or synthetic or somewhere in between.



Atmosphere: Breathable mix

Temperature: Variable cold-to-temperate

Biosphere: Engineered

Population: Billions of inhabitants

Tech Level: TL 4

Traits:

- × **Colonized Population**
- × **Police State**
- × **Hatred**

A gift to House Crux from the terraformers of House Triangulum, this world is one of the greatest human populations in the sector. It is a place of regimented law and order, and its alien population is either a symbol of human mercy (for allowing them to live and remain here after the terraforming) or human cruelty (for they are little more than a servant underclass) depending on who you ask.



Atmosphere: Thick atmosphere

Temperature: Temperate

Biosphere: Human-miscible

Population: Alien civilization

Tech Level: TL 4

Traits:

- × **Alien Ruins**
- × **Night World**
- × **Pleasure World**

If Roadside Picnic had been about hypertechnological post-humans creating a strange pleasure world and then abandoning it, that's what Kama would be. It's a planet of darkness and delight, where the Guild once dwelled before they build HQ to house their strange race. Now it lies semi-dormant with adventurous nobles, plebs and corporates alike all visiting to try and find something to make them rich or give them a high they can get nowhere else. A playground of epic delights and strange dangers.

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